

themselves ; that he was, therefore, determined to leave England, but, before he went, would consent to any law they should offer, for appointing commissioners of both Houses, to administer the government, and, then they would not be jealous of themselves.

When he first mentioned this to me, I treated the notion as the most extravagant and absurd, that ever was entertained, and begged him to speak of it to nobody, for his own honour. He heard me patiently talk against it, for two hours, but concluded at last, as of a notion he still retained.¹

The speech William intended to make is extant.² Macaulay states that ' The King's strong understanding had mastered, as it seldom failed, after a struggle, to master, his rebellious temper. He had made up his mind to fulfil his great mission to the end/ ³

William's letters to Heinsius show precisely how long this resolution to retire lasted. He referred to it first in a letter of December 20, 1698, and lastly in a letter of January 6. By January 13, he had given it up and could speak of the state of public affairs.

I am sorry to tell you that things here go worse than any-one could have imagined and on all sides I see nothing in prospect but confusion. If France has spent its money here for the purpose, it might have saved it. I assure you nothing is so superfluous. For men here are generally so blind and so ill disposed that they need no payment to make them

give away their own safety.⁴

This bitter letter was written when William was cruelly mortified by the decision of the Commons to send his

¹ William Coxe, *Shrewsbury Correspondence* (1821), pp. 572-3.

² *Ibid.* p. 574 ; *Original Letters*, ed. Henry Ellis, 2d Ser., iv (1827), 216-7.

A facsimile of it is reproduced in *Macaulay*, VI, 2867-9 (xxiv).

³ VI, 2879 (xxiv).

⁴ *Klopp*, viii. 273-8.